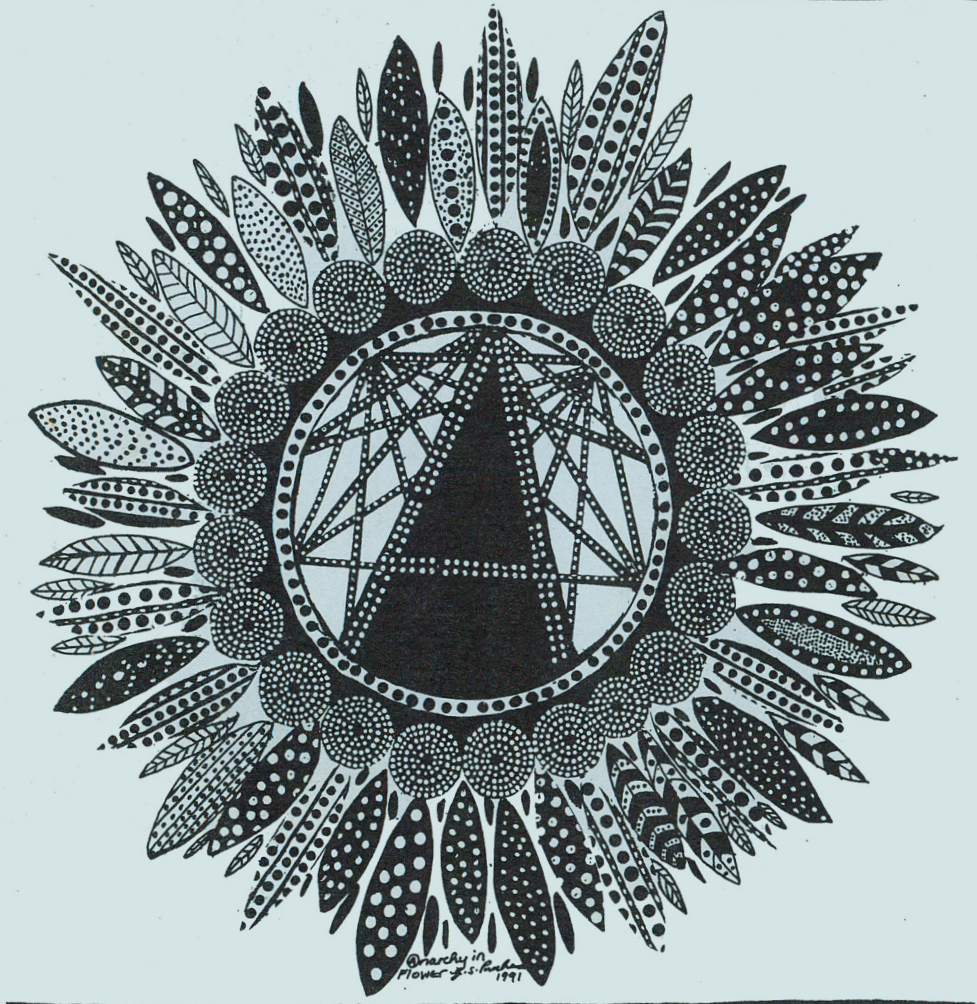
# SOCIAL ECOLOGY, ANARCHISM, & TRADES UNIONISM




by

Graham Purchase

Rebel Worker Pamphlet #11

# SOCIAL ECOLOGY, ANARCHISM, & TRADES UNIONISM

*by Graham Purchase*

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## Part 1

## Bookchin: The Anarchist-Ecologist of the late 60s and 70s

Bookchin has deservedly emerged as a major thinker and writer of the late Twentieth Century. His ideas on the relationship between social ecology, anarchism, and trade-unionism, although controversial and sometimes straightforwardly wrong or dishonest, are nonetheless worthy of our close and considered attention.

Although Bookchin has recently become openly hostile towards trade-unionism and anarcho-syndicalism, in fact to any class analysis at all, this has not always been the case. Some of his earlier thinking on these subjects, although deeply critical of syndicalism, were insightful comments upon the value of traditional revolutionary theory and practice, unlike his recent quite unnecessary attacks on anarchism. His essay **Self-management & the New Technology**, written in 1979 is perhaps most important in this respect. In this essay Bookchin argues that the syndicalist conception of the "factory" or the "workplace" as being of overriding importance as a focus for political and social activity in a future anarchist society is an overly optimistic view of the liberatory potential of large-scale industrial activity. Bookchin claims the factory has destroyed the craftsman and the artisan and degraded the nature of work and labour through relying on a system of mass-industrial production that reduces human beings to mere engine parts:

*"Of the technical changes that separate our own era from the past ones no single device was more important than that of the least mechanical of all - the factory. Neither Watt's steam engine nor Bessemer's furnace was more significant than the simple process of rationalising labour into an industrial engine for the production of commodities. Machinery, in the conventional sense of the term, heightened this process vastly - but the systemic rationalisation of labour to serve in ever specialised tasks demolished the technical structure of self-managed societies and ultimately of workmanship - the "selfhood" of the economic realm. .....True craftsmanship is loving work, not onerous toil. It arouses the senses, not dulls them. It adds dignity to humanity, not demeans it. It gives free range to the spirit, not aborts it. Within the technical sphere it is the expression of selfhood par excellence - of individuation, consciousness, and freedom. These words dance throughout every account of well-crafted objects and artistic works.*

*"The factory worker lives merely on the memory of such traits. The din of the factory drowns out every thought, not to speak of any song; the division of labour denies the worker any relationship to the community; the rationalisation of labour dulls his or her senses and exhausts his or her body. There is no room whatever*

*for any of the artisan's modes of expression - from artistry to spirituality - other than an interaction with objects that reduce the worker to a mere object.... Marxism and syndicalism alike, by virtue of their commitment to the factory as a revolutionary social arena, must recast self-management to mean the industrial management of the self.... Both ideologies share the notion that the factory is the "school" of revolution and in the case of syndicalism, of social reconstruction, rather than its undoing. Most share a common commitment to the factory's structural role as a source of social mobilisation.... The factory not only serves to mobilise and train the proletariat but to dehumanise it. Freedom is to be found not within the factory but outside it."*

**(Towards an Ecological Society, Black Rose Books, 1980, pp 123-6 passim)**

**Bookchin concludes that the factory system upon which industrial syndicalism rests, is intrinsically authoritarian and dehumanising. The syndicalists have confused the factory, the "realm of economic necessity", with the "realm of social freedom", which is nature, wilderness, community and the liberated city. Contrary to the syndicalist vision, the factory could not on any account ever be regarded as the primary locus of political action and freedom. Only the re-emergence of a freely communicating, non-hierarchical and economically-integrated social existence would be genuinely capable of guaranteeing liberty and prosperity. Besides, Bookchin later argues, the coal-steel-oil technology upon which the factory system was based is economically redundant, through resource depletion. Solar and wind energies etc, although capable of being used in large scale industrial manufacturing processes, are much more efficiently applied on a local or small scale basis. An economic infrastructure consisting of a large number of much smaller workshops producing individually crafted tools from local non-polluting power sources, within the context of an ecologically integrated community, not only represented a truly ecological vision of human social destiny, but one that also saw no need for the vast and intrinsically dehumanising industrial manufacturing plants and factories of a past era. The factory no longer represented even the realm of necessity – environmental determinants having rendered the factory system of industrial production ecologically and vis a vis economically redundant.**

**Bookchin in this penetrating essay makes fair comment. The pictures that have until recently adorned our anarcho-syndicalist journals; of thousands of workers, heads held high and anarchist banners in hand - marching out of rows of factories triumphantly belching out black smoke in unison – exhibit a singular inability to appreciate the scope and challenge of the ecological revolution that threatens to engulf both syndicalism and anarchism alike. The reasons for this are historical and practical and are not due to any theoretical shortcomings. At**

the end of the 19th century, which witnessed rapid industrial development; a peasantry, an urban proletariat and a Marxist & socialist opposition that regarded the ecological and anarchist ideal of eco-regional self-sufficiency and town/country balance, as too utopian, or as indicative of a backward looking, pre-industrial ideology, anarchism and anarchists as an organised political force saw fit, and with good reasons, to devote a substantial amount of its efforts towards industrial and trades-unions activity and down play the more ecological aspects of the anarchist vision. This was an eminently practical response to the organisational problems of the day and anarcho-syndicalists through no fault of their own have tended to focus upon industrial democracy within the factory or yard and have to some extent ignored other, wider ecological aspects of the anarchist tradition. Anarchism however, unlike Marxism has always taken a profound interest in the proper relationship of industry to ecology (most famously exhibited in Kropotkin's **Fields, Factories & Workshops**) and Bookchin has in response to our current ecological concerns been quite correct in stressing the importance of the ecological region, green technology and ecologically integrated cities and communities within anarchist theory and thereby restore a proper sense of balance to the anarchist and ecological debate.

This essay was however written over a decade ago and with the other essays in **Towards an Ecological Society** in which it is anthologised forms a bridge between the two phases of his writing and thinking: Bookchin the Anarchist-Ecologist of the 1960's and 70's and Bookchin the Social Ecologist of the 1980's and 90's. Bookchin the Social Ecologist is far less kind on anarchism and trades unionism than he might otherwise be. Bookchin has without doubt been one of the most prominent and anti-statist thinkers of recent decades. His two pamphlets **Ecology & Revolutionary & Revolutionary Thought** and **Towards a Liberatory Technology** (both written in 1965 and reprinted in an anthology of his writings from the period entitled **Post Scarcity Anarchism**) are clear, succinct, and easily understandable statements of the ecological-anarchist viewpoint displaying all the most admirable aspects of anarchist pamphleteering and collectively representing some of the best and most important radical writings of the 1960's. Bookchin in these early pamphlets as well as his two later books; **The Limits of the City** (1974) and **Toward an Ecological Society** (1980) brought up to date and enlarged upon many of the social-ecological insights and ideas to be found in the works of past anarchist thinkers (Fourier, Peter Kropotkin & Elisee Reclus) clearly, logically and convincingly showing that anarchism with its non-centralist and non-hierarchical philosophy envisioning a harmonious stateless order composed of federation of self-governing cities ecologically integrated with their surroundings bio-regions is the **only** social philosophy capable of ensuring the long-term survival of both our species and our planet.

Most of the above mentioned works were however written nearly two decades ago and since the end of the 1970's Bookchin has spent his time expounding his 'self-styled' ecological philosophy – SOCIAL ECOLOGY – publishing many books on the subject; **The Ecology of Freedom** (1982), **The Modern Crisis** (1986), **Remaking Society** (1989) & **The Philosophy of Social Ecology** (1990).

## Part II

## Bookchin, the Social Ecologist of the 80's and 90's

Although none of the basic tenets of Bookchin's theory of social Ecology are in anyway incompatible with social-anarchism and although not denying the importance of anarchism, in his more recent works he rarely mentions the word, and then only in passing. His explicit rejection of "working class organisation" & "trade-unions" shows a widening emotional and philosophical gap between his theory of Social Ecology with the traditions of anarchism.

None the less, many things that Bookchin has to say about a range of issues are relevant to anarchism and anarchists. This is especially true of his extended discussions on the role of patriarchy in creating a hierarchical, exploitative and anti-ecological social system which are valuable and explore issues, somewhat underplayed by Kropotkin and Emma Goldman in their analysis of the evolution and maintenance of authoritarian structures in human society. (Reclus however in the way he uses gender ascription, he & she, about nature is more interesting in this respect than otherwise supposed).

It is in his rejection of class analysis however, that Bookchin really seeks to form a cleavage between Anarchism and his favoured theory of Social Ecology. In the most accessible of his recent works, **The Modern Crisis**, his attacks on Anarchism, the I.W.W. and Trades-unionism are simply outrageous.

Anarchism, claims Bookchin, because of its insistence upon class analysis and a belief in the overriding revolutionary importance of the industrial proletariat, represents with Marxism just another tired old socialist philosophy which is no longer relevant to the present day:

*"The politics we must pursue is grassroots, fertilised by the ecological, feminist, communitarian and anti-war movements that have patently displaced the traditional workers' movement of half a century ago. Here the so called revolutionary ideologies of our era – socialism & anarchism – fall upon hard times. Besides, their 'constituency' is literally being 'phased out'. The factory in its traditional form is gradually becoming an archaism. Robots will soon replace the assembly line as the agents of mass industrial production. Hence future generation of industrial*

*proletarian may be a marginal stratum marking the end of American industrial society.*

*"The new "classless class" we now deduce is united more by cultural ties than economic ones: ethnics, women, countercultural people, environmentalists, the aged, unemployables or unemployed, the "ghetto" people, etc. It is this "counter-culture" in the broadest sense of the term with its battery of alternative organisations, technologies, periodicals, food co-operatives, health and women's centres that seem to offer common resistance to Ceasarism and corporatism. The reemergence of "the people" in contrast to the steady decline of "the proletariat" verifies the ascendancy of community over factory, of town and neighbourhood over assembly line. The hand fits the glove perfectly– and clenched it makes the real fist of our time."*

( The Modern Crisis, Ch.4, passim)

Exactly what sense are we to make of such sweeping dismissals of several centuries of sustained resistance to the encroachments of capital and state by ordinary working people is quite unclear. Anarchism and Anarcho-syndicalism have to my knowledge always emphasised the need to foster community and has never made the absurd claim that society could be "organised from the factory floor". The primary unit of Anarchist society has always been the free, ecologically integrated city or town– How else could one hope to organise social life in the absence of the nation-state?? Besides, in the absence of state-supported industrial capitalism trades unions and worker's cooperatives – be they bakers, grocers, coach builders, postal workers or tram drivers would seem to be a quite natural, indeed logical and rational way of enabling ordinary working people to co-ordinate the economic and industrial life of **their** city, for the benefit of themselves rather than for the state or a handful of capitalist barons and it is simply dishonest of Bookchin to claim that anarchism has emphasised the historical destiny of the industrial proletariat at the expense of community and free city life. Beyond this, trade unions are composed of people – feminists, peace activists and ecologists included and are simply a means by which people can come to organise their trade or industry in a spirit of equality, peace and co-operation.

Although thankfully, tens of millions of people are no longer forced to claw at rock with crude picks in the bowels of the Earth I fail to see why Bookchin is confident that the "worker" is an obseletion. How is one to travel or phone another city in Bookchin's ideal world of liberated, self-sufficient city-communes unless we have to repair the roads, railway or telephone cables? People will always wish to direct objects through organised space and hence a postal service will always be necessary (if we ever come to colonise other planets even more necessary). Economic and industrial life is unfortunately global in nature

and the idea that one could organise an inter-continental railway network from the individual town or city is as absurd as the proposition that one could organise social life from the factory floor – an idea that he mistakenly credits to industrial-syndicalism.

The industrial proletariat, although it may certainly never represent the force of numbers that it did a century ago is hardly likely to disappear and Anarchism simply states that in the absence of capitalism and the nation state the workers in each industry must organise their affairs for the good of themselves, their city, their ecological region and the whole of humanity. Anarchism is not a worker's party – it is an idea that embraces all manifestations of human social life – the free city, the agricultural collective, the hobby group and trades-unions in so far as they are useful to our species and operate freely of government in a non hierarchical manner.

Bookchin is more constructive when he points to the "green-network" as providing a new and significant springboard to revolutionary transformation.

Over the past 30 years, individuals and groups of people connected by nothing else than a love of the Earth have set about putting their philosophies into action upon a local basis. Local groups of horticulturalists growing native trees for free distribution, organic food co-operatives, forest action groups and a plethora of specialised ecological journals and zines, etc., bringing people together from all backgrounds, races and classes. The local, popular decentralised nature of this green networking representing a powerful and non-centralised force in the direction of social and ecological change. At the more radical end of the green-network there are people who care deeply about the environment but have become disillusioned about the ability of the state/capitalist order to solve the urgent ecological problems of the day and have set out in the name of common-sense and humanity to save the planet by any reasonable means – legal or otherwise. These people have flung themselves in front of bulldozers and rainforest timber ships. Their antics and exploits have undoubtedly captured the popular imagination and these people have thankfully had comparative success in saving significant portions of wilderness from destruction. Due however to the lack of a significant working class power base their efforts have resulted in them having won few battles at the price of rapidly loosing the ecological war. They didn't get their message across to their potentially most powerful and effective ally – trades-unions and the organised working classes. Capitalism and the state which have undoubtedly been the cause of untold environmental destruction has been fought for centuries by working class organisations inspired by a vision of more equal, just and equitable society. The fact that capitalism and state are not only unjust and authoritarian but also extremely environmentally destructive only seeks to confirm the inherent cor-

rectness of centuries of radical working class organisation and trades-union opposition to the encroachment of capitalism and the military state upon the social and ecological fabric of human society. The heroic and consistent effort of working class organisation to resist state-sponsored capitalist exploitation is a long and bloody history involving the useless murder, ruthless torture of millions upon millions of ordinary people whose only crime was to attempt to protect their communities and their natural resources from being sacrificed for the short-term benefit of the rich and powerful.

Eco-activists are relative newcomers to the art of organised resistance to the capitalist and military state and have yet to digest the hard historical fact that the institution of state-sponsored multi-national exploitation cannot be defeated without the commitment of large sections of the organised working classes to the green cause. It is the working classes who transform raw nature (trees, minerals, etc.) into the industrial products we consume – and regardless of the wishes of government, or their capitalist masters, are ultimately capable of initiating change.

The tragic lack of communication between eco-activist groups and trades unions has meant that the ecology movement has suffered from a significant lessening of its practical power-base and has led to the absurd situation in Australia of green activists fighting with rank-and-file members of logging-unions, whose members, history has shown us, have little to gain from large scale exploitation of primary forest land. The attempted assassination of I.W.W./Earth First organisers recently in the U.S.A. should serve as a lesson for both the greenies and the workers alike – **that the real enemy are the institutions of capital and state and not one another**. Both the greenies and the working class would be better served by joining together and working towards a grass-roots, revitalised and ecologically informed trades-union movement which if not capable (for the time being) of over-throwing the state-military forces of the rich and powerful is at least able to resist the worst excesses of the present profoundly destructive state-capitalist order. That the welfare of the worker is intimately dependent upon a healthy environment is an unquestionable fact, and both eco-activists and trade-unionists must choose the path of strength and victory by striving to achieve ever greater levels of co-operation and common purpose within and between their respective organisations.

I have encountered thousands of people who on a local and co-operative basis are constructively working towards a greener future – there are however many intellectually degenerate and philosophically idiotic concepts contained within the "green ideology" that holds many of these people together – Earthworshipping, rituals, astrology and eco-mysticism, etc. which tend to make for a less than coherent green movement. The bourgeois or middle class

element has further weakened the practical worth of many of the more successful "green" ventures of recent years (e.g. The Body Shop). Expensive health food shops and trendy bookshops selling a wealth of over-priced environmental paraphernalia reveal more a love of profit – an ability to 'catch on' to a new idea rather than a genuine and unimpeded love of nature. Lacking in class consciousness the green movement has all to easily let itself be integrated with the capitalist system and is therefore caught in an intellectual and tactical contradiction. Its members, predominantly coming from bourgeois background, are unable to be truly critical of the inherently destructive and anti-ecological aspects of the capitalist and class system of which they uncritically form a part.

Large sections of the "green movement" take a simplistic and anti-technological stance. Industrialism as such and not industrial capitalism being seen as a curse of humanity and nature. Other sections of the anarchist and green movement – take a more sophisticated position about technology and insist upon the fact that their has been a second industrial revolution – the communications, computer and technological revolution which has a life of its own that may have superseded its origins in capitalism and which threatens to reek ever-greater levels of social and ecological disintegration. Whether the technological revolution will yield predominantly libertarian or authoritarian results is of course a matter of speculation – and only time will tell. But Bookchin in advocating both craftsmanship and large industrial plants run by robots seems confused on the issue! Bookchin has never to my knowledge ever endorsed any kind of anti-technological viewpoint – that make his anti-union stance all the more puzzling? How is one to design, implement, manufacture and recycle in a non-authoritarian and co-operative manner the environmentally friendly eco-technologies of which he so frequently refers unless he is willing to enter dialogue with the industrial proletariat who form the backbone of the profoundly destructive oil-steel-coal culture of the present day, but who force of strength and brute labour could turn ammunitions factories into wind generator manufacturing plants and our forests into gardens, -undreamt of by the prophets of all ages? The need to move away from large-scale industrial activity is obvious to the ecologist – but our present factories must begin to design, manufacture and distribute the new technologies of tomorrow. A successful end to this period of transition and technological scale readjustment towards the decentralised application of agro-industrial production cannot be achieved without the co-operation of the industrial proletariat.

Undeterred, Bookchin goes on to insult American anarchists and trade-unionists of the past. "These immigrant socialists and anarchists (presumably referring to such people as Emma Goldman or Alexander Berkman) were

largely unionists rather than revolutionary utopians" who had little understanding of American democratic traditions. Had the American people ignored the "narrow" and "class based" ideologies of these anarchist and socialist foreigners and upheld the individualistic values of the American Constitution – concretely enshrined in the small town meetings of the pioneers – an authentic American radicalism could have taken a firmer root and the confederal and decentralised vision of a free-American republic could well have become a reality:

*"Irish direct action, German Marxism, Italian anarchism and Jewish socialism have always been confined to the ghettoes of American social life. Combatants of a pre-capitalist world, these militant European immigrants stood at odds with an ever-changing Anglo-Saxon society...whose constitution had been wrought from the struggle for Englishmen' Rights not against feudal satraps. Admittedly these "rights" were meant for white men rather than people of colour. But rights they were in any case – universal, "inalienable rights" that could have expressed higher ethical and political aspirations than the myths of a 'workers party" or the day dream of "One Big Union" to cite the illusions of socialists and syndicalists alike. Had the Congregationalist town-meeting conception of democracy been fostered... and the middle classes been joined to the working classes in a genuine people's movement instead of being fractured into sharply delineated class movements it would be difficult to predict the innovative direction American social life might have followed. Yet never did American radicals, foreign born or native ask why socialist ideas never took root outside the confines of the ghettoes, in this, the most industrialised country in the world."*

(The modern Crisis, Ch 4 passim)

Again what sense is one to make of such comments? Bookchin accuses American radicals of the past of having a ghetto outlook – yet it is precisely this group of people "ethnics, unemployables and the ghetto people" whom Bookchin underlined in the previously quoted passage as representing the new revolutionary "classless class" of people who will somehow organise the co-operative suburban communities of the future social ecological order. Interestingly the "ethnic, unemployable and ghetto people" of the 19th century of whom he speaks so disparagingly found the best way to overcome their difficulties was to form themselves into unions on the basis of location, culture, trade and interest and collectively fight in One Big Union of ordinary people for a more just and equitable world.

Besides the specific organisation to which he refers, the I.W.W. was not unappealing to "native" Americans as Bookchin suggests – rather they were systematically smashed in a most brutal fashion by the combined forces of

federal military might and the black plantation workers of America's deep south who were organised at great risk to life by I.W.W. representatives had little stake in the comfortable middle-class vision of small town life of which Bookchin speaks. Moreover the I.W.W. who counted both lesbians and Red Indian organisers amongst its ranks was the first union to call for equal pay & conditions for women and actively sought to set up unions for prostitutes – and in doing so achieved far more for the feminist cause than any amount of theorising about the evolution of patriarchy could ever hope to have done.

Finally anarchism in embracing trades-unionism did not, as Bookchin claims, have some naive or mythical faith in the ability of working class culture to save the world. Anarchism did not look towards the Marxist vision of a worker's paradise it merely said that working people if they wanted to create a more balanced and equitable world they must join together and organise for themselves. Trades Unionists which were then, as now, capable of bringing millions of workers together in the general strike was not an end in itself but rather a vehicle for putting ideas into action and produce movement capable of resisting the military might and economic imperialism of the state-capitalist power monopoly.

Groups of peace protesters or environmentalists singing songs outside nuclear bases, although not irrelevant or unproductive, do not by themselves represent an organisational basis for sustained resistance to the state-capitalist system on a country-wide basis, as Bookchin claims. Unless the telephones, railways, and other vital industrial systems continue to function from the moment the state-capitalist order begins to crumble, then all Bookchin's ideas concerning an ecologically integrated and decentralised republic in the absence of the state (i.e., anarchism) will remain nothing but a pipe-dream.

The overly aggressive industrial culture which has led our planet to the brink of catastrophe must certainly undergo radical changes, but this in no way implies that industrial unionism should disappear. On the contrary, an ecologically informed and regenerated trade union movement could do much to initiate the necessary changes. The boycotting of environmentally damaging substances and industrial practices; the insistence on doing healthy work in an environmentally sustainable manner; of producing socially necessary products based on need rather than profit; etc, are real issues, capable of being forced home by traditional means. Strikes, walk-outs, and sabotage would undoubtedly bring about the changes in our industrial infrastructure quicker than environmental legislation and any number of health food stores. For instance, the Green Bans. In fact the tragic failure of the green movement to get their message across to ordinary workers and union members, has resulted in a

significant lack of power for both parties. Bookchin's comments are at best unconstructive and at worst positively harmful.

Further evidence of Bookchin's attempt to distance himself and his theory of Social Ecology from Anarchism can be seen in his latest book, **The Philosophy of Social Ecology (1990)** in which he attempts to provide an abstract philosophical basis for his social-ecological theories. Depressingly, the rich ecological content contained in anarchist life-philosophy is largely unacknowledged – and although Bookchin regards an anti-hierarchical, non-centrist, self-determining and freely evolving concept of nature and society as both rational and desirable – Anarchism a rich intellectual source of many if these ideas in terms of both its theory and practice is dealt with in a few paragraphs in a token, shallow and unconvincing manner. Instead Bookchin presents us with an intellectual history of the development of social-ecological thought which sees fit to devote pages upon pages to Diderot's "sensibilities" and Hegel's "Concept of Spirit" at the expense of Kropotkin's ethical naturalism, Reclus' bio-regionalism or Fourier's ecological-utopianism – all of which (as Bookchin well knows) contain important truths and insights and have made a significant contribution to the development of his own social-ecological thinking. Instead, the book, which is subtitled **Essays on Dialectical Naturalism** informs those readers who wish to find out more about the philosophical basis of Social Ecology & Ecological Ethics – to study the notoriously cloudy pages of Hegel's **Phenomenology of Spirit**.

What has led to Bookchin's disillusionment with the organised anarchist movement is of course a matter of speculation?? A generous explanation of his objectives is that he wishes to produce an ecological ethics and philosophy that does not scare people off through using the emotionally loaded and popularly misunderstood term "Anarchy" whilst integrating the more anarchistic ideas and elements floating around in the peace, environmentalist and feminist movements within a broadly anti-statist framework. If this is indeed his intention then he has, in my opinion been quite successful. His theory of social ecology is presented in a rational, scientific and secular format that can enter dialogue in a meaningful way with other bodies of thought in the western philosophical tradition.

The misrepresentations of anarchist theory and practice do however perhaps require a less generous assessment of Bookchin's motives, unconscious or not, that goes beyond the not-uncommon fault of having an insatiable appetite for controversy. Bookchin is a gifted and talented writer and thinker, the value and intellectual credibility of his work may however be coming increasingly undermined by an unhealthy desire to be the intellectual leader and founder of a 'new'

ecological movement. The sole modern originator of the bundle of ideas he had chosen to call Social Ecology.

Although to be fair Bookchin does acknowledge the influence of the great anarchist theoretician and bio-geographer Peter Kropotkin in all the above mentioned works, he does so only in passing and certainly exhibits no real desire to deal with Kropotkin's thought in the detail and at the length it deserves. There are of course no real developments in social and political theory. The battle between nature and society, freedom and tyranny, liberty and authority etc., have been with us since the beginning of human-time and Kropotkin no more than Bookchin can claim to have originated the libertarian and anarchist debate. Nonetheless, with the possible exception of his analysis of the development of patriarchy (and Reclus' concepts of the organic, complementary nature of the man-woman-nature relationship are in many ways similar to Bookchin's) all of the basic components of Bookchin's social-ecological vision – diversity, decentralisation, complementarity, alternative technology, municipal-socialism, self-sufficiency, direct-democracy – were fully elaborated in the works of the great anarchist thinkers of the past – Charles Fourier, Elisee Reclus & Peter Kropotkin – all of whom advocate a global federation of autonomous and ecologically integrated cities and towns – and Bookchin has done little more than update these ideas and present them in a modern form. A task I might say that is no small achievement and one that he has performed admirably.

To be sure anarchism in common with most other movements and practices has much to gain from incorporating the insights of feminist analysis of the development of authority and hierarchy into its vision of a social and ecologically harmonious society - and Bookchin in attempting to integrate a broadly socialist-feminist perspective with anarchist principles has done much valuable work in recent years. Many viewpoints contained in the socialist-feminist analysis of history and society, have however, always existed (though latently) within the anarchist movement, and anarchism is considerably less guilty of having ignored women's issues than most other social protest movements of the recent past. To use socialist-feminist ideas on hierarchy, authority and the state and blend them with concepts within the broader anarchist tradition, as Bookchin has done, although necessary, is not a particularly exacting intellectual task. Literally to filch all the major ecological insights of anarchist theory and practice superficially dress them up in a socialist-feminist cum neo-hegelian garb and go on to more or less claim them as his own is reprehensible. To actively misrepresent the movement from where these ideas originally came is to exhibit an intellectual schizophrenia and commit an intellectual outrage.

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